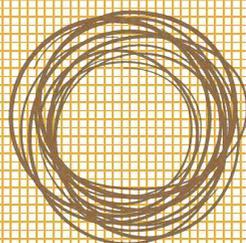


Hearing Voices
Chatter from the Willow
Vol. 4

**Shared Works
During the Covid-19 Pandemic**

**Fostering creative ties
in times of virtual isolation**



**WILLOW
ARTS
COMMUNITY**

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Background:

Steve Plews

Shared Works, an Introduction

In 2020, members of the Willow Arts Community were confronted with two momentous challenges. One was the loss of its much-loved space, the Rodman Hall Art Centre which Brock University sold to an investor. The other was the onset of the covid-19 pandemic, still raging today, which resulted in significant restrictions and lockdown measures taken to protect the population.

Thanks to the energy of its Director, Shauna MacLeod, and the creative resilience of its members, the Willow Arts Community immediately reinvented itself online, gave itself the time to grieve our losses, and... moved on. Classes continue, creation happens, personal interactions flourish.

This zine celebrates our unbroken spirit and our sense of togetherness. The shared works you are about to discover are about the associations we make between each other's creative output. They respond to each other and each page displays how contributions by different authors/artists form a coherent whole thanks to the echoes and contrasts they formulate.

I thank all participants for their resolute work.

Enjoy,

Catherine Parayre

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2021

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Requiem for Rodman Hall



Kathy Black

Over the past three years, the tragic debate about Rodman Hall has sadly reiterated that this place is not replaceable. In fact, this was already understood a few days after it was built by Thomas Rodman Merritt in the 1850s.

I read a reprint of writings on St. Catharines in the 1850s by an author named Junius. In it he responded to questions about what St. Catharines once looked like. He replied that to understand this, one needs to go to the grounds of Rodman Hall.

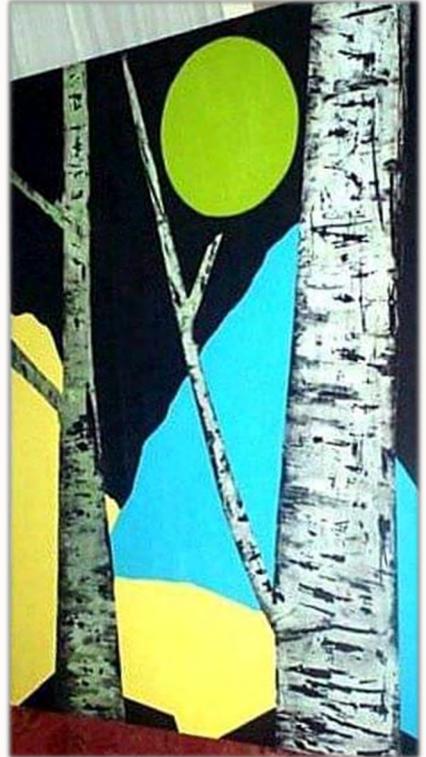
When I was a child, the grounds of Rodman Hall looked very much as they would have when described by Junius, a landscape dominated by towering white pines. For the past sixty years, the mansion has served as an art gallery and different generations of artists have exhibited what drives their passion to create. In 2015 a new white pine was planted on the grounds in celebration of two hundred years of peace between Canada and the United States. A recent contribution is *Carolinian Blue* which gives view to the secret underground world of tree roots and provides an interpretation of Laura Secord's walk through what in many places is still an old-growth Carolinian forest. In a walk with the Niagara Falls Nature Club I learned that towering old tulip trees are still found, and happily regenerating.

John Bacher

Snow of winter blankets the grass
Twigs reach through the snow as if trying to escape softly
As the snow slowly melts small pockets emerge
Is there anyone in these small pockets

lying on my bed
the window open
it's raining
a Cool Wind every once in awhile
swirls around my legs
ribbons ribbons
the cars in the wet street below
their tires like bacon in a hot pan
i close my eyes
take in the sounds
drip drip drip on the windowsill
the smell of the city wet and cool
in the late fall early winter night
the breeze cool and feathery
continues to tickle my legs
so pleasurable
so relaxing
so enjoyable

Mike Higgs



Paul Reslinski

Stranded

There's a homeless man in our neighborhood who pushes a black baby stroller all over the place. No baby. Just a garbage bag jammed down with stuff he owns strapped into the seat. In the carriage underneath, there's a bunch of cords, an empty bottle and some red wires.

From the back and from a distance though, you can't tell there's no baby.

Sometimes, though, he stroller where can see it. Unattended. I looking for treasures left the road. Last pulled over and ran crazy thinking, I be-child had been pissed at him showed up at Then she and drove away pushing like it was one



quite frequently leaves the people and cars

think he goes forgotten at the side of week, a woman her Volkswagen to the stroller, lieve, that a deserted. Very when he his stroller. calmed down away. He ran it ahead of him, of those

expensive joggers' strollers.

I felt angered as well, till I realized that the guy himself was once that bag of garbage left frequently alone at the side of the road in his stroller.

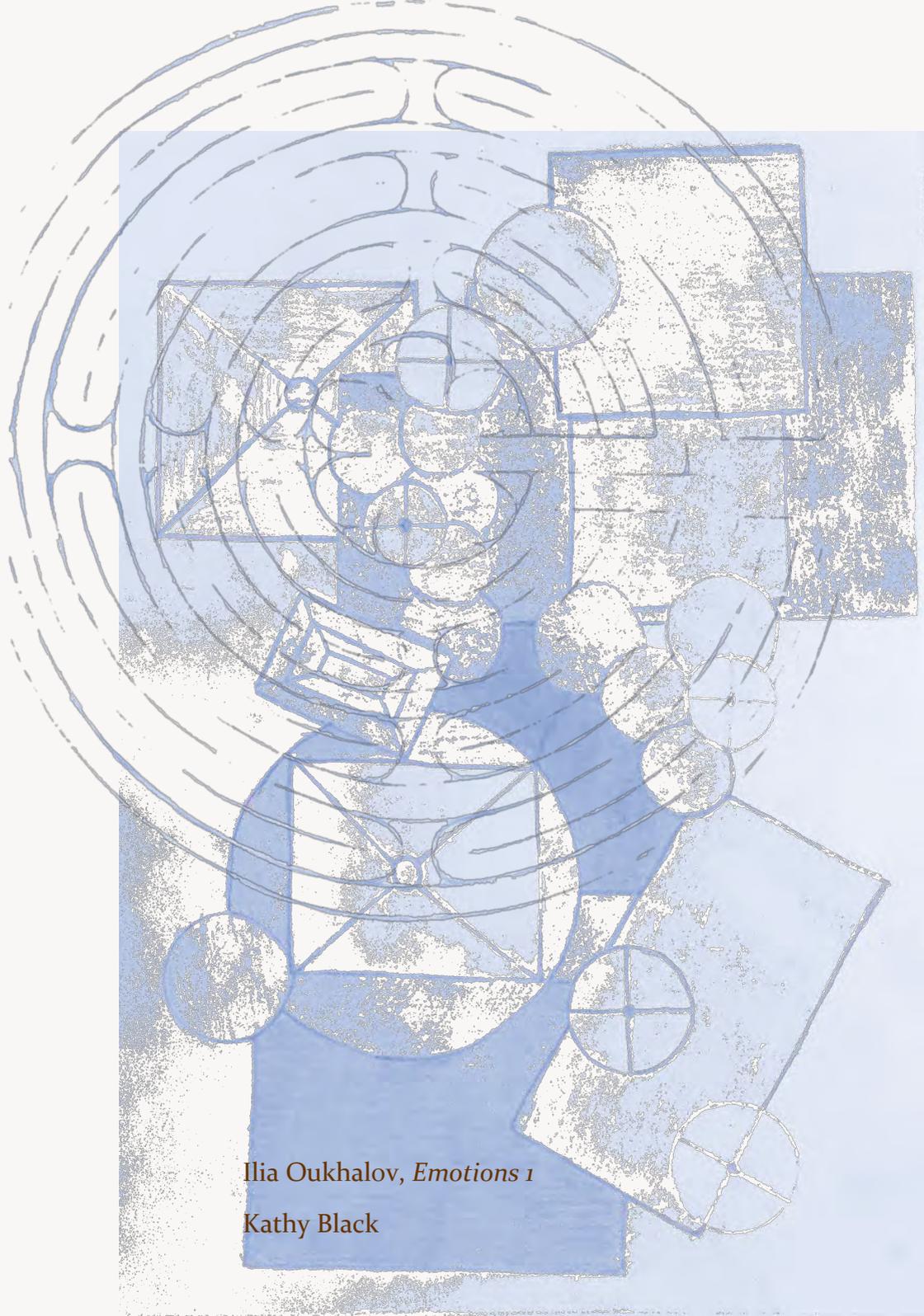
Someone just gave him some change in the Timmy's drive thru.

John Sweeney

Paul Reslinski



Kathy Black
Parminder Bains



Ilia Oukhalov, *Emotions 1*

Kathy Black

The pandemic poem

We're all in this together

you say

One for all, and all for one

But how can that truly be? Experience this pandemic

It all started with the toilet paper, grocery shortages, then medical supplies became a necessity, loneliness, boredom, isolation, abandonment, fever, dry cough, tiredness, aches and pains, sore throat, diarrhea, conjunctivitis, headache, loss of taste or smell, or a rash on skin, or discolouration of fingers or toes.

Concerning symptoms would be having difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, loss of speech or movement. Seek immediate medical attention if you have serious symptoms. It takes 5–6 days from when someone is infected with the virus for symptoms to show, however it can take up to 14 days to settle and come into the light. Disappointment, reassurance, acceptance

Each feeling is

A fellow friend

Luckily one two three look at me for I'm as happy as can be

As soon as four five six you came into the mix

The eagle tracing its prey, searching

Positive to get us through this

Which we will – together

Sarah Burgess



Lay Out My Bones

I laid all my bones out on the floor
And shut the door behind me

A short time after
I found my way back
I saw my bones scattered across the floor

The great iron door looming up ahead
Crescent moon rising higher
and higher, a flash of light
Liquid fire dripping off metal

I did a full circle
I knew it wouldn't take me long to return
I packed my bones up in a pretty carved box
And went to search for new scenery

Kyle MacDonald



Cathy Brady

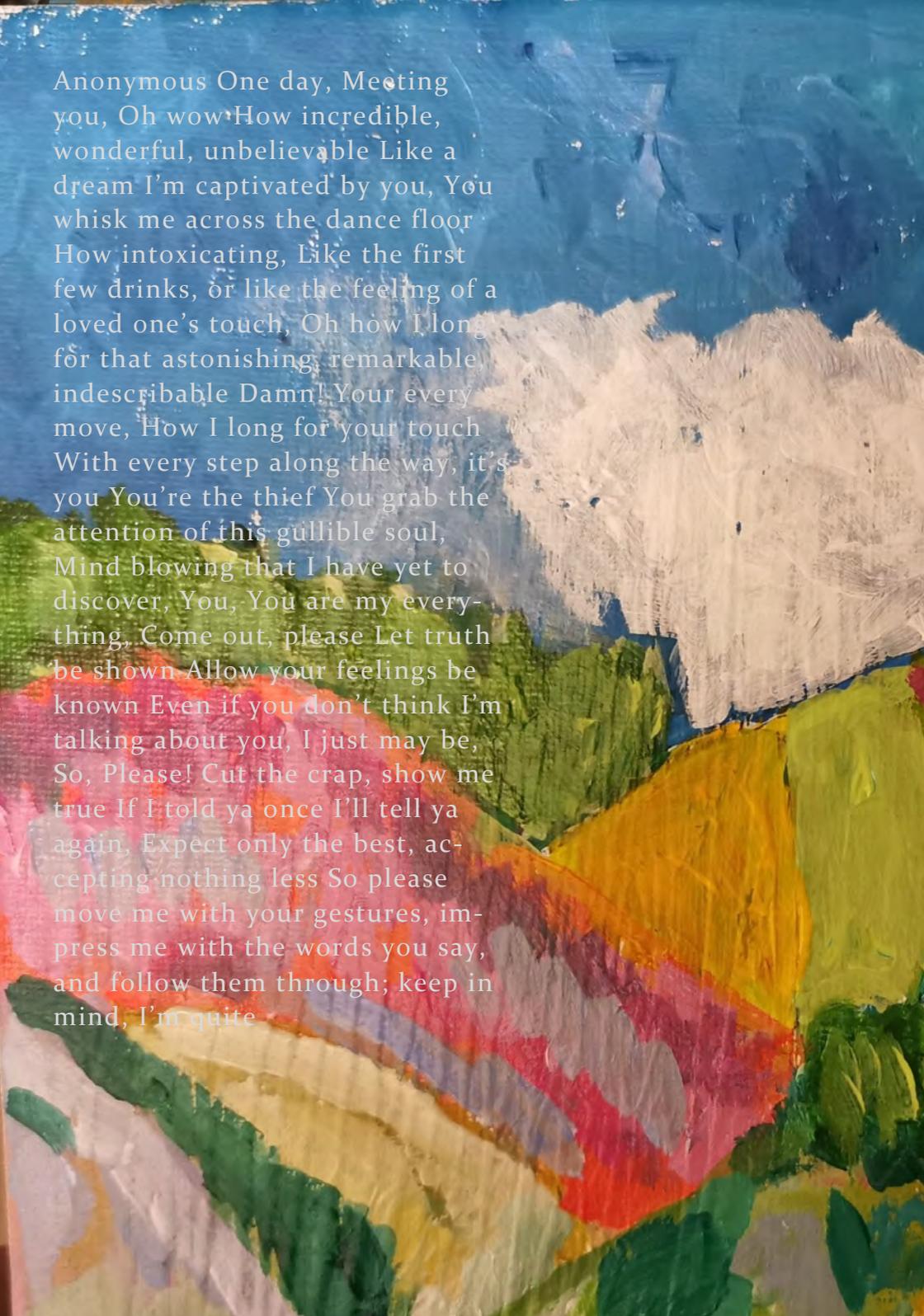
Split

Cut the darkness
Divide it in two
Let me sit in the middle of it
A blue hue circling me
Right near the edge of where the endless black begins
Where does it end
Where could I end up
I am not sure
But I sit on the edge of it

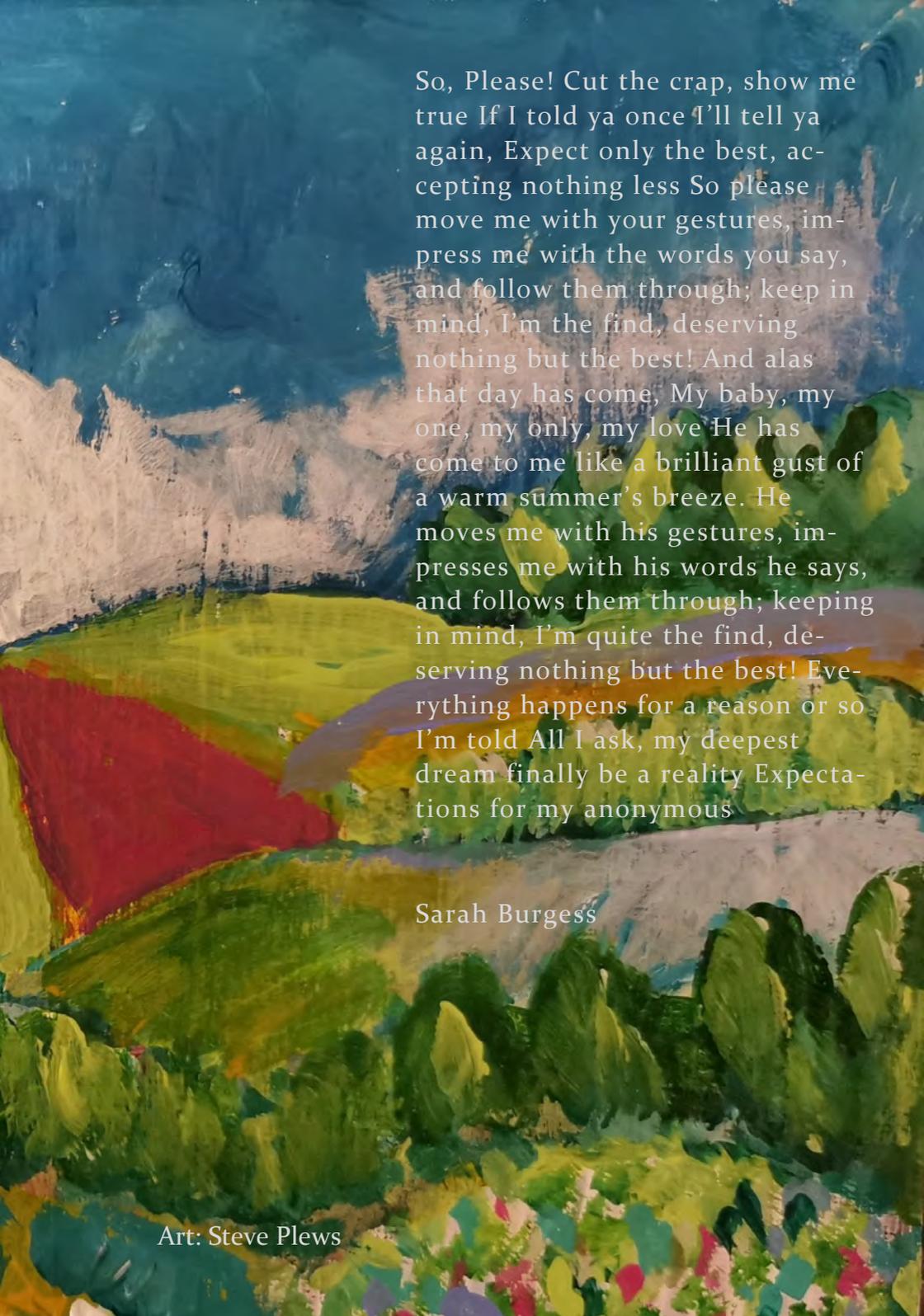
Kyle MacDonald



Cathy Brady



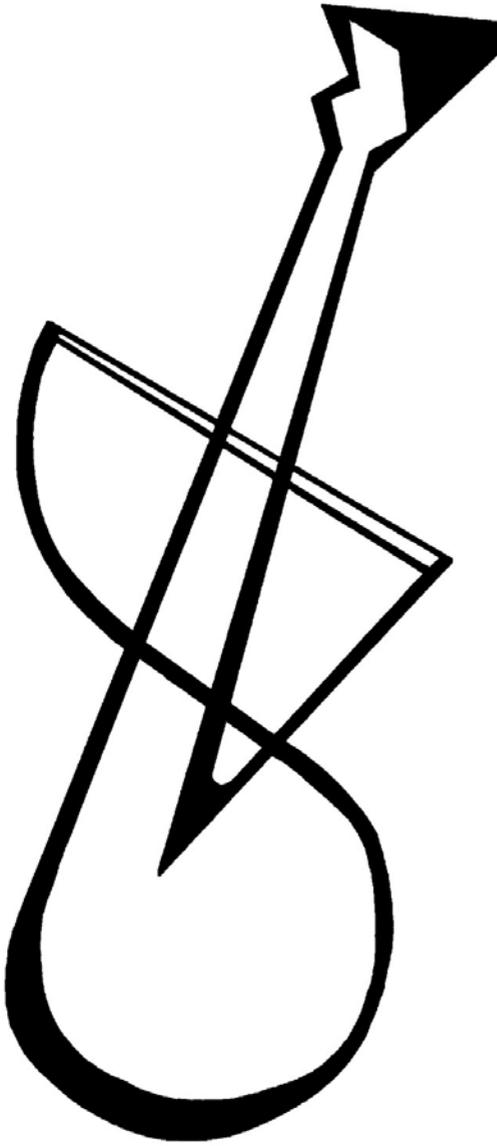
Anonymous One day, Meeting
you, Oh wow How incredible,
wonderful, unbelievable Like a
dream I'm captivated by you, You
whisk me across the dance floor
How intoxicating, Like the first
few drinks, or like the feeling of a
loved one's touch, Oh how I long
for that astonishing, remarkable,
indescribable Damn! Your every
move, How I long for your touch
With every step along the way, it's
you You're the thief You grab the
attention of this gullible soul,
Mind blowing that I have yet to
discover, You, You are my every-
thing, Come out, please Let truth
be shown Allow your feelings be
known Even if you don't think I'm
talking about you, I just may be,
So, Please! Cut the crap, show me
true If I told ya once I'll tell ya
again, Expect only the best, ac-
cepting nothing less So please
move me with your gestures, im-
press me with the words you say,
and follow them through; keep in
mind, I'm quite



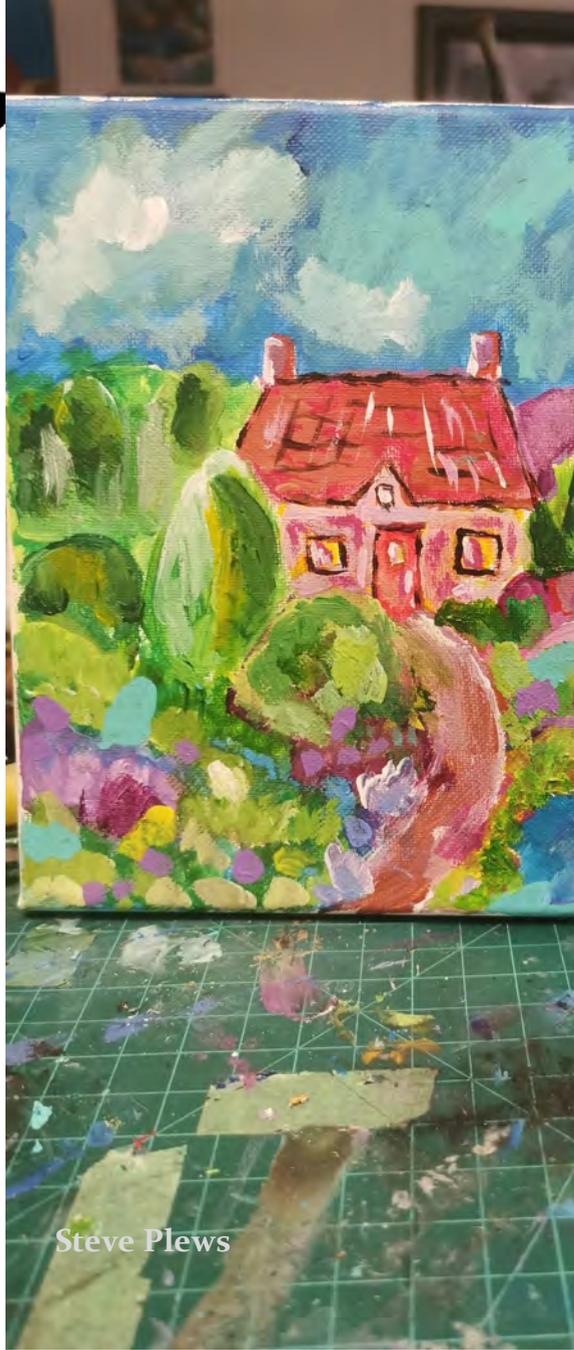
So, Please! Cut the crap, show me
true If I told ya once I'll tell ya
again, Expect only the best, ac-
cepting nothing less So please
move me with your gestures, im-
press me with the words you say,
and follow them through; keep in
mind, I'm the find, deserving
nothing but the best! And alas
that day has come, My baby, my
one, my only, my love He has
come to me like a brilliant gust of
a warm summer's breeze. He
moves me with his gestures, im-
presses me with his words he says,
and follows them through; keeping
in mind, I'm quite the find, de-
serving nothing but the best! Eve-
rything happens for a reason or so
I'm told All I ask, my deepest
dream finally be a reality Expecta-
tions for my anonymous

Sarah Burgess

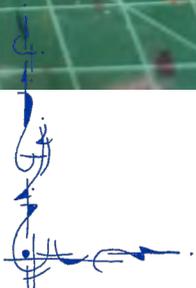
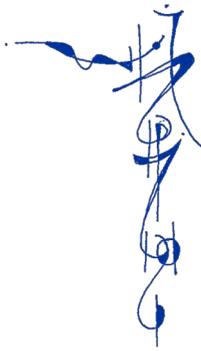
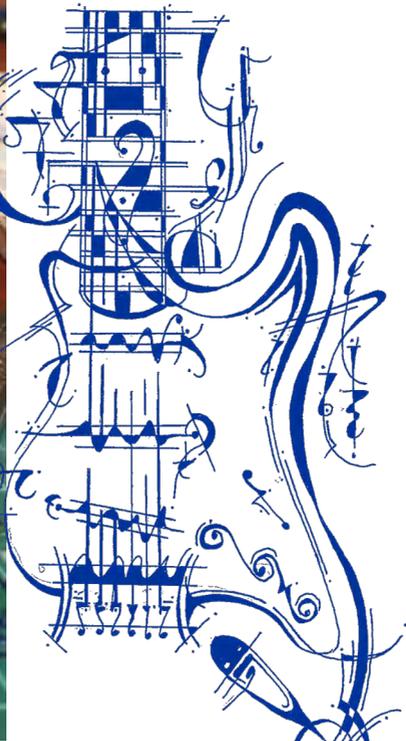
Art: Steve Plews



Mark Roe, *Guitar*, 1992



Steve Plews



Mark Roe, *Martin*
OM, 2019

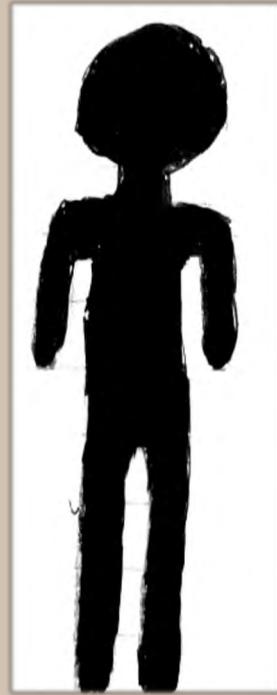
From Shutting Down to Lifting Up

Shutting down can sometimes hit you so hard;
Even you thought any people or places could make
you happy.

As soon as you start feeling the pain, the process
can be so slow to start a new plan. The idea of
goals can be tricky but can also be easy. If you complete
the easier way, then moving forward will
start lifting you up as of today.

Remember;
When your dream is shutting down, it's never too
late to take care of yourself first before you start
lifting yourself up!

Tammy-B



Suzanne Nickel



Suzanne Nickel

A speck, A smidgen, A dash,
A droplet, A puddle, A splash!

A vision, A dream, A goal,
A belief, A concept, A soul!

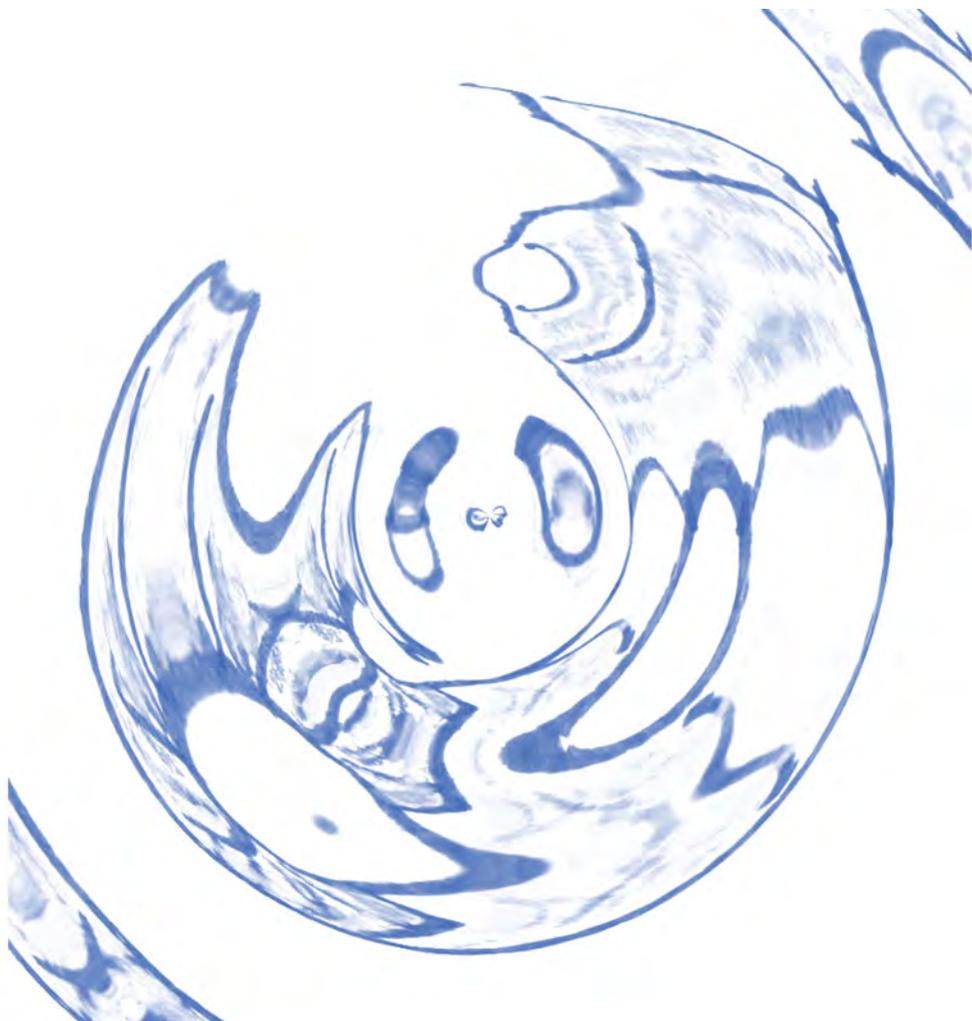
A colour, A contrast, A hue,
A canvas, A paintbrush, A view!

A sound, A lyric, A song,
A beat, A rhythm, A bong!

A word, A sentence, A detailed story,
A form, A paragraph, A written Glory!



Suzanne Nickel



Mike Higgs, *Distortion*

Public Park Bench Poets

Jamie- I'm experiencing writers block which has made Me feel frustrated! I truly need a fresh mind and outlook... so I opt to go out to the Public Park for a change of scenery.

I arrive at the Public Park and start breathing in and feeling the brisk fresh air while viewing the trees in nature.

This is soothing my Soul with a nice calming effect!

What!? I can't believe my eyes...there's an empty Park Bench so...I think I'll stop and sit for a while...then low and behold in comes Paddy talking before she even gets to the Bench, then finally sits down!

Paddy- Man Oh Man, traffic is CRAZY today!
I had to flag the Bus Driver, I'm so happy I didn't miss the Bus!

My snow pants were squeaking and I'm walking like a penguin. I may have to oil them sometime today!

Don't you just love my coat? The hood has earflaps that glow in the dark, seriously! So,
if I get lost, I'm easy to find. True so true.

Jamie- You sure do put a new meaning to, Lost & Found! (Lol...) Speaking of which I see some Old Time Loves, Maggie & Albert coming to join Us on Our Bench. Amazingly...back in the day were High School Sweethearts and still carry a Torch & Spark for one another!

Poof...Out of the Blue, Albert puts his arms to his side then extends them to a, 'Dance Stance' and together they hear a Song from long ago as they sway in a Sweet Embrace!

Oh, these two are Something to Experience...
(sighing)!

In the midst of all of this happening... there are Dogs Walking by, Children playing, birds, squirrels and even Chipmunks all throughout the Public Park.

Jamie- Boy, Oh Boy, It's so Nice to see! (Smilin' at Paddy)

Paddy- Now...There's some 'Living Proof Poetry' in the Making right here and now!

WOW! Look at the time already, it just flew by... (glancing at her Cell)

I'd better hurry to catch My Bus home!

Jamie- Well...We talked, listened & watched a lot today!

We didn't even have Time to Rhyme! What a Concept!

POETS who didn't even know it!!!

Paddy- C'ya in the New Year 2021,My Friend!

Soft Hugs, Smiles and Laughter Together

TWO POETS TOGETHER...

Don't You just LOVE SHARING THE SIMPLE THINGS IN LIFE!!!

~Jamie/InSpired Spirit~ and Paddy Barrett



Paul Reslinski



T.Doe, *Evolution*

I Metamorphosize

expansion is a commendable thing for the mind
those who stuff their thoughts with prose, with facts
who make their minds fat
are treated as the greatest of our kind

but what about the body?

I often wonder why
I can't celebrate that I'm
growing, growing, g r o w i n g,
that I'm worthy and deserving
of the space that I occupy?

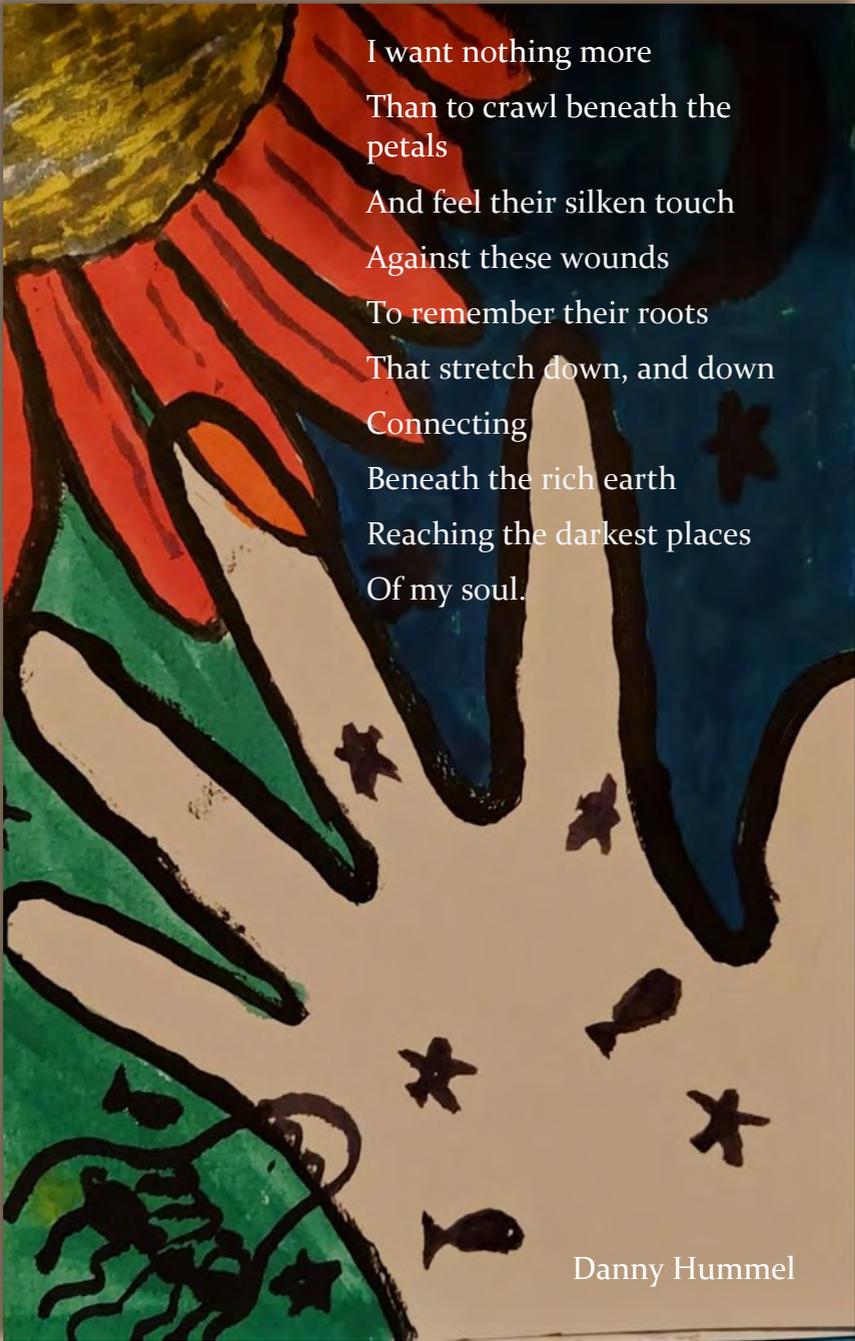
I metamorphosize

simply nothing curbs this appetite
it makes me capable of flight
I am delicate yet strong
how is this considered wrong?

I burst from my casing, the confines coming undone
shredding my skin like one would a cocoon
pieces of me are dashed to the floor
I'm not the same as I was before

living here feels suddenly righteous

Allison Carroll



I want nothing more
Than to crawl beneath the
petals
And feel their silken touch
Against these wounds
To remember their roots
That stretch down, and down
Connecting
Beneath the rich earth
Reaching the darkest places
Of my soul.

Danny Hummel

Victoria Brecht and Bekka Wolf, zine fall



Victoria Brecht and Bekka Wolf, flower brooch and nature mandala



Quilting w Mom.

Painting	Friend	ART	FAMILY	Loyal mom Dad sister
Strong	CATS	LOVE	MUSIC	Creative Family
Kingsley Luna two	October	Movies	Writing	Loves letters
Hero	singing	DRAMA	Colouring	Cards
Xmas Bir thday	Exploring	Laugh no	Cooking	every day Dad
New	Hiking	Make- UP	LEARNING	Always
hikes alot	Dogs	FUN	Walking	Everyday challenge
energy Deer				
ets Cats				

Happy Winnie Bailey Drives Friends 2020 Canal. Block

Feel Like I Belong

Challenge myself!

Space!

Gives ME CONFIDENCE

Shapes the Woman I am Becoming!

Supports My Dreams

TEACHES NEW/Techniques

Gives ME HOPE!

THE STRATEGIES

Voice my plans.

WILLOW COMMUNITY

Lets Me Be Creative!

Gives Me Time!

SHARE...

Helps Me...

Express Myself

GROW

TRY!

Meet New Friends!

Collaborate w Others

Makes ME SMILE!

Practice

Supports ME

Compliments My Life.

Works with ME!

Language Gaps

“How are you doing during this strange time?” My therapist in her matching purple suit and graying hair asks, her wild arm gesture implying that strange time equates to Covid.

“Well I don’t have bangs yet,” I say with a playful smile—

“Sorry I don’t get it,” she looks at me her face blank.

“Just some millennial humour for you.”

“No I don’t get it can you please explain?”

So, the rest of our session is filled with mixed connections stemming from intergenerational miscommunications and socio-economic miscommunications as I reference memes to explain feelings, jokes about suicidality, mental illness and being too broke to live.

I later laugh with my friends that I need a millennial therapist.

Instead, I’m stuck with the lady with the matching pant suits who suggests I need a tropical vacation when I talk about the stress of living under the poverty line on ODSP, and I can’t help but wonder who is trained to listen.

Emily Gillespie



Sheila-Anne Downey

Mental Health & Addiction Support Services in Niagara Region

Distress Centre – 905 688-3711 (St. Catharines)

24-hour telephone support in the Niagara Region for the safety and emotional wellness of every person in need.

<https://distresscentreniagara.com/>

Niagara Regional Police Service Crisis Outreach and Support Team

(COAST Niagara) – 1-866-550 5205 (24/7 crisis line)

COAST Niagara provides mobile crisis outreach and intervention service offering immediate telephone counseling. If required, a mobile team will respond in an unmarked police cruiser and conduct a mental health assessment onsite. For life threatening emergencies, call 911.

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) Niagara – 905 641 5222

The CMHA provides immediate access counselling.

www.cmhaniagara.ca

Community Addiction Services of Niagara (CASON) – 905-684-1183

CASON provides comprehensive alcohol, drug, and gambling, addiction treatment for individuals and their families.

www.cason.ca

Niagara Sexual Assault Centre (CARSA) –

905 682-4584 (24-hour crisis line)

CARSA responds to the needs of survivors of sexual violence and provides counselling, support and emergency services to survivors and their families.

www.niagarasexualassaultcentre.com

Niagara Region information on Covid-19

<https://www.niagararegion.ca/health/covid-19/>

For more information, visit Niagara Community Information Database (24/7) – dial 211 or 1-800-263-3695

<https://niagara.cioc.ca/>

Willow Arts Community is an arts + peer support organization dedicated to reducing barriers and providing opportunities for adult artists and creatives living with mental illness/substance use disorder in Niagara. We use the arts as an agent of social change by connecting and engaging with the public through exhibitions, publications, and performances to lessen the effects of stigma and social isolation.

This zine was created during the Fall 2020 Arts Training Season, supported by partnerships with Workman Arts Toronto, and with thanks to the Ontario Trillium Foundation, St. Catharines Cultural Investment Program, and The May Court Club of St. Catharines.



WILLOW
ARTS
COMMUNITY



WORKMAN
ARTS

Generously supported by the St. Catharines
Cultural Investment Program (SCCIP)



Ontario
Trillium
Foundation



Fondation
Trillium
de l'Ontario

An agency of the Government of Ontario
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario



MAY COURT
CLUB OF ST. CATHARINES

Supporting Our Community